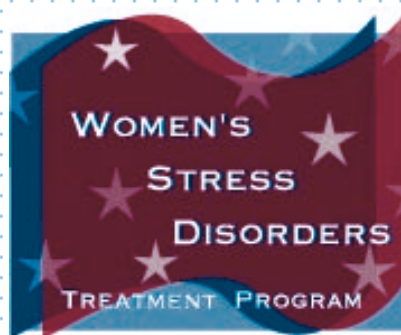


# ***Enhancing Relationships***

What to do if  
nothing else works



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*All these skills seem good, but I'm not sure they'll help.*

- ◆ While it is true that there is no guarantee that it will make a difference, you increase the odds of changing the situation if you bring it up. Persistence is helpful.
- ◆ If, despite trying these skills, someone is consistently unwilling to try to treat you in less hurtful ways, you may want to consider significantly changing or ending that relationship.



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## ***How would I be able to decide what to do?***

- This is a hard one.
- The challenge here is:
  - Figuring out if it is hopeless
  - Figuring out how to end it if you decide to do so
  - Sticking with your decision



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***Here's an example  
of when you need  
to make a decision***

You decide you want to stay sober, that drinking has been causing you major problems, has basically been stealing your life from you. Your good friend was your drinking buddy, and she misses your company when she drinks, so when you're together she tries to convince you to have "just one, for old times' sake".



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## *Is this a hopeless relationship?*

- ◆ Ask yourself if she is generally interested in supporting your well-being. Does she encourage your efforts at sobriety?
- ◆ Did you give her a chance to change her behavior by telling her (in a way she could hear non-defensively) how it has been affecting you?
- ◆ Are you able to spend time together without either of you drinking?



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## ***What if there is still no positive change?***

- ➔ Then you may want to end the relationship, or at least change how close you want to be.
- ➔ If you do this in a skillful, respectful way, you will feel better about it in the long run.
- ➔ It is important for your self-esteem that you treat people in a way that feels moral and respectful to you.



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## ***What's a “skillful” way to tell her that?***

- Focus on how you feel (“I struggle to stay sober when I spend time with you”) rather than focusing on an evaluation of her behavior (“you drink too much”).
- Be direct (“I need to stop seeing you” vs. “maybe I’ll see you sometime” when you never intend to).



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***That sounds so sad***

- ◆ It's true, it is.
- ◆ Ending a relationship, even a negative one, can cause grief and sadness.
- ◆ No one is ever 100% wonderful or 100% awful, so you may want to plan for how you will handle the memories of some of the good parts of the relationship after you end it.



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## ***How do I know if I should bring a problem up?***

**This is not a complete list, but some guidelines you could use are:**

- If you're losing sleep over it
- If, after a few days, you can't seem to get it out of your mind
- If you are having difficulty feeling any caring feeling towards this person because you are so focused on the conflict



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*Okay, I understand  
when, what about  
how?*

- ◆ Your intention is important.
- ◆ If you want to keep this relationship you need to act in a way that allows them to keep liking and respecting you.
- ◆ Even if you want to end it, you can act in a way that allows you to maintain your self-respect.



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## ***Specifically, how do I do this?***

- 1. Describe the situation (just the facts, no interpretations)
- 2. "I feel ....."
- 3. "I want ....."
- 4. "Are you willing to do that?"



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***Do you have an example?***

- Sure. Say your best friend consistently cancels plans on you at the last minute for non-emergencies.
- Use the model to describe the situation without blame, state your feelings, what you want, and ask if they will do what you want.



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## ***I need that spelled out more***

- 1. "I was just heading out the door when you called to cancel our plans tonight. This happened last Tuesday and last Saturday also."
- 2. "I feel hurt and angry about this."
- 3. "I want you to call me the day before if you need to cancel our plans".
- 4. "Are you willing to do that?"



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## *Seems do-able*

- It actually works really well.
- There are a couple of hard parts where people get stuck.
- First, it's sometimes hard to figure out what you want (versus what you want them to stop). It is important to ask for what you want rather than just asking them to *stop* doing something.



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## ***What else?***

- ◆ Describing the situation with “just the facts ma’am” is hard. It pays to be very careful in describing.
- ◆ Avoid words like “always” or “never”, instead using specific examples. Don’t dredge up every example from the past years, however.



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***Describing the feelings  
is hard for me.***

- ➔ That's true for a lot of people.
- ➔ Be careful to describe your feelings versus your thoughts or your interpretations of their behavior.
- ➔ For example, "I feel that you are being inconsiderate" is not a feeling statement. Neither is "I feel that I have the right to tell you how I feel". That's actually a thought.



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## ***So what is a feeling?***

Feelings fall into the categories of:

- mad
- sad
- glad
- scared



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*Okay, I think I've got it.*

- Great!
- You can adapt that model to different types of interactions.
- At work or out in public you probably won't share as much about your feelings as you (appropriately) would with your partner or best friend.



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***I'm ready to try it.***

**Good luck!**

**The more you practice, the more natural  
these skills will become.**



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